



## Transforming undergraduate nursing students into global citizens: A short-term study abroad program

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### Summary

In view of the globalization of health care, schools of nursing are continuously revising their curriculum to meet the needs of an increasingly diverse patient population. The United States is rapidly becoming a more diverse nation and ethnic groups will constitute a majority of the American population later in this century. The goal of this project was to develop a short-term international immersion experience that would foster global awareness among undergraduate nursing students, and to advance the development of future nurses to be better able to meet the needs of diverse individuals, families, and communities in the United States.

This study abroad program was based on the conceptual framework of Campinha-Bacote's (2002) model of cultural competence for healthcare providers, and was threaded throughout the program, from program development to student evaluations. Campinha-Bacote (2002) defines cultural competence as a process in which the nurse continuously strives to achieve the ability and the availability to effectively work within the cultural context of the individual, family and community. The study abroad program was also grounded in the philosophy of experiential learning. According to Jarvis (1995), experiential learning is learning that comes primary from experiences. Unlike passive learning where students only learn through listening, experiential learning occurs through activity learned in the classroom. Kolb (1984) believes that learning is a process whereby knowledge is created through a transformation of experiences (p. 280). He uses four stages of learning to demonstrate how the transformational process takes place and knowledge is created. The four stages of learning are: concrete experience, reflective observation, abstract conceptualizations, and active experimentation (Kolb, 1984).

The program had three phases: pre-departure, the experience, and student evaluation. During their pre-departure phase, students attended weekly orientation sessions to differentiate between elements of culture. The experience involved seven undergraduate nursing students and two faculty members spending two weeks in Grenada, providing health promotion services to underserved populations. Finally, students attended post-travel debriefing meetings in-country and at home. The study abroad program was designed with the notion that when students step outside the classroom and into the global community, knowledge is created through a transformational process.

## **References**

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